

## SWAA NATIONAL BRANCHES ARE STRENGTHENED

The AWARE-HIV/AIDS project has since its inception supported the Society for Women and AIDS in Africa (SWAA) International through the building of technical and organizational capacities as its contribution to their fight against the AIDS pandemic. Having achieved this as evidenced by the results of the second management capacity assessment (using the TOCAT evaluation tool) done in June 2006, the next hurdle was to strengthen the national branches of the organization in order to continue to advocate and sensitize for women and children access to HIV/AIDS care and treatment.

To ensure this, SWAA in partnership with AWARE HIV/AIDS developed a project for its branches in specific countries to streamline their projects and mainstream gender and OVC access to treatment, care and support. The countries selected for these capacity building activities included Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo.

These countries were provided technical assistance in reviewing existing strategic and operational plans or support to develop new strategic and operational plans where there is none; develop potential donor registers, develop project proposals and human resource data information on the branches.

This capacity building exercise was also used as an opportunity to publicly promote these national branches and to advocate to stakeholders, especially the government and development partners who did not know of the existence of such branches. SWAA-Togo is a typical example. This group had no formal relation or contact with any high level government official or any development partner before this advocacy activity. The exercise thus afforded the SWAA team the opportunity to officially meet Togo Prime Minister, Lawyer Yawovi Agboyibor and also to hold a press conference where the team tabled their activities and their objectives.

Before the exercise, only SWAA-Sierra Leone had a strategic plan and the branches had different programs indirectly targeting orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and direct programs for women's access to treatment and care and support.



*SWAA team in a group picture with the Prime Minister of Togo, Lawyer Yawovi Agboyibor (center in black suit) after a courtesy call on him. Also in the picture is the president of WANASO, Mr. Theophile Hounhouedo (3<sup>rd</sup> from left) who accompanied the SWAA team*